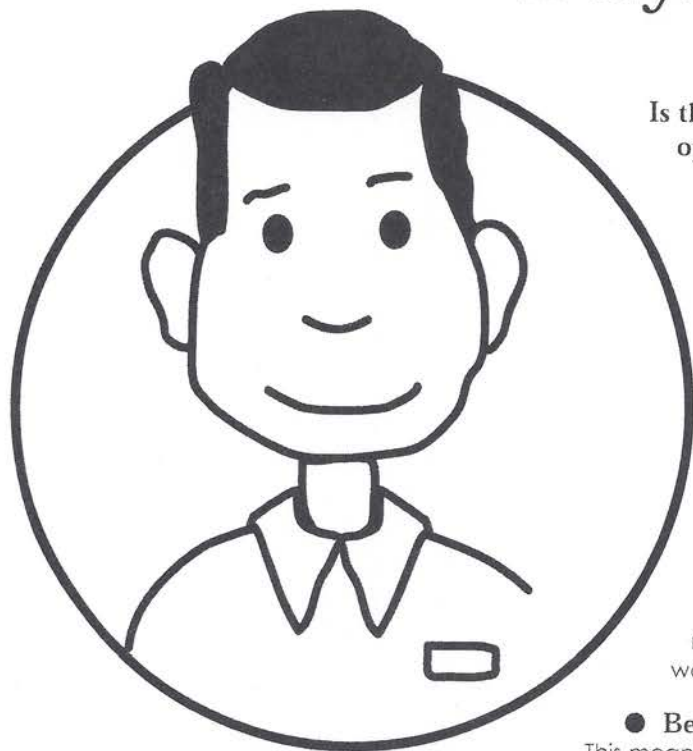


Defying Defiance



Is there anything as maddening as a child who boldly opposes authority?

Far too many children these days openly oppose their parents' authority. There are two main reasons this happens:

1. The media tells them they should.
2. Their parents tell them they can.

Let's briefly address these two issues, and talk about what you can do about it. First, the media. We cannot hide our children in a bubble, nor would we want to do so. But we can:

- **Educate our children about the difference between real life and life on the screen.** Talk to your kids about what they may see on TV and at the movies. Compare what the screen showed and what would happen in real life.

- **Be selective about what your children see and read.** This means you should be aware and take an active role in deciding what they can or cannot view.

- **Make your own decisions about what's right and wrong.** Don't be misled by advertising or political rhetoric.

It's easy to put the blame on the media. But now comes the part that's harder to accept. How are you contributing to this problem?

Making unenforceable demands

When you demand something of your child that you cannot enforce, you open yourself up to defiance. As an example, you catch your child eating cookies before dinner and you yell, "You better eat your dinner, young lady!" Well, what are you going to do if she doesn't? Get the cookie back? Or a parent demands that her child, "Go to sleep right NOW!" Many insomniacs will gladly explain that you cannot make a person sleep! You can make him go to bed, however.

Too much talking and too little action

When you repeat your request to a child four or five times you weaken your position. Your child will quickly figure out that he can easily ignore you and suffer no repercussions. When you don't make the effort to quickly follow through on your request, your child learns to defy you.

Lack of family rules

When your household is lacking in firm and specific rules, your kids may defy you with "assumed ignorance." In other words, "I didn't have to clear the table yesterday, maybe I can get away with not doing it today." Lack of rules forces you to make constant decisions and judgments and prevents your kids from learning the law of the land.

Constant nagging

When your child knows that the most she'll suffer for her defiance is the constant drone of your voice in the background, she may decide that the trade-off works for her. Parents who nag often have "parent deaf" children. The only cure is to talk less and act more.

Take a look at these points, and note which ones you are doing. Once you change, you can defy defiance.

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of "Kid Cooperation and Perfect Parenting."

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